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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 NEW DELHI 001192

SIPDIS

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TAGS: [PREL](#) [PINR](#) [IZ](#) [IS](#) [IN](#)

SUBJECT: WEST ASIA ENVOY OFFERS PALESTINIAN SECURITY TRAINING

REF: NEW DELHI 961

Classified By: DCM Robert O. Blake, Jr. Reasons 1.4 (B, D)

1. (C) Summary: GOI Special Envoy for West Asia and the Middle East Peace Process Chinmaya Gharekhan told the DCM on February 15 that India would like to provide and fund security training for the Palestinian Authority, in response to what he said were statements by the Secretary welcoming such offers. Gharekhan, who is planning a "familiarization trip" to the region from February 19, emphasized India's desire to work in coordination with the US and expressed interest in attending a UK-sponsored conference in March on the peace process. On Iraq, the DCM urged the GOI to reconsider its ban on Indian travel there, noting that India may lose a valuable opportunity by delaying. Gharekhan responded that New Delhi will do so, but only after assessing that the security situation has improved, in consideration of the high political stakes involved in any violence against Indians there. The Envoy, an experienced UN veteran and former Indian Permanent Representative, suggested that it would be useful for the US to work to have the new Iraqi government recognized by the UN as soon as possible. End Summary.

"We are Happy to Help"

2. (C) While acknowledging that the US has the lead on the Israeli-Palestinian Peace Process, Gharekhan told the DCM he thought India could play a role. Upbeat about recent developments, the Envoy said "we can offer any kind of security training, counter insurgency, border security, crowd control, even for an eventual army." Gharekhan highlighted the need to work with the US to avoid redundancy or contradiction and asked that the USG keep India in mind in that regard. Gharekhan added that he does not have a "blank check," but India will provide the training after the GOI has a better sense of what the Palestinians' needs are.

3. (C) During his first trip to the region as Indian Special Envoy, which will begin on February 19 and take him first to Jordan and Egypt, and then to Tel Aviv and Ramallah, Gharekhan will also inform Israel of New Delhi's offer. Confident that Tel Aviv would support the Indian initiative, he added that he plans to meet PM Abbas hopes to see Prime Minister Ariel Sharon, as well.

4. (C) Further emphasizing India's strong interest in a role in the Middle East, Gharekhan mentioned a March conference in London on the Israeli-Palestinian conflict that PM Tony Blair is associated with, and asked for US support in securing an invitation for India. He added that FM Natwar Singh will make the same request during Foreign Secretary Jack Straw's visit to New Delhi February 17-18. Mission would welcome Washington Guidance on whether it would be possible for India to attend. Mission flagged for our UK counterparts that the FM will be making this request.

Travel Ban Stands

5. (C) Emphasizing US and Indian common interests in the stabilization and reconstruction of Iraq, the DCM welcomed the Envoy's support for peace efforts in the region, and asked if the GOI had any new ideas on Iraq. Gharekhan said that he will not visit Iraq during this trip, as he was waiting for the new government to settle in. The DCM urged the GOI to reconsider its ban on Indian travel to Iraq, noting that by delaying India may lose valuable opportunities to get in on the ground floor as the Iraq transformation proceeds. Gharekhan acknowledged that "India cannot afford to stay out," but recalling the three Indian truck drivers kidnapped there during summer 2004, he asserted that the possibility of another such crisis is a considerable political obstacle to lifting the ban. Despite this, he commented that all political parties in India recognize the need for their country to be involved in Iraq, "even the Left."

"Take Iraq to the UN"

6. (C) Gharekhan suggested that the US work to have the new Iraqi government recognized by the UN as soon as possible.

Based on his many years' experience in that organization (reftel), there would be broad support for such a move, perhaps in a special session, he observed.

Job Description

17. (C) Gharekhan explained that he would define his mandate as he went along, but that his broad areas of focus would be the Middle East Peace Process, along with Iraq. The Envoy, who does not yet have a space in the MEA, remarked that he does not need an office there, but will eventually have a staff. His area of responsibility includes two MEA bureaus: West Asia and North Africa (WANA) and the Gulf Division. He has told us he does not expect to have any involvement on India's Iran policy.

Bio Note

18. (C) A friend of FM Natwar Singh, Gharekhan is a career diplomat who has served as India's Permanent Representative to the UN in New York (1986-1992) and Geneva (1977-1980). He was MEA Joint Secretary for the Pakistan and UN divisions (1980-1983), and an Additional Secretary in Rajiv Gandhi's PMO from 1984 to 1986. After his retirement in 1992, Gharekhan was appointed the UN Secretary General's Personal Representative to the Security Council, and later as Special Coordinator in the Occupied Territories from October 1996 to September 1999. In October 2004, Natwar made Gharekhan part of his six-member Policy Advisory Group. After retirement, he also lived for an extended period in Sharon, Connecticut, where his daughter was a doctor. Since returning to Delhi, he has been a regular on the retired Ambassador's circuit, and has been open and accessible to the Embassy.

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